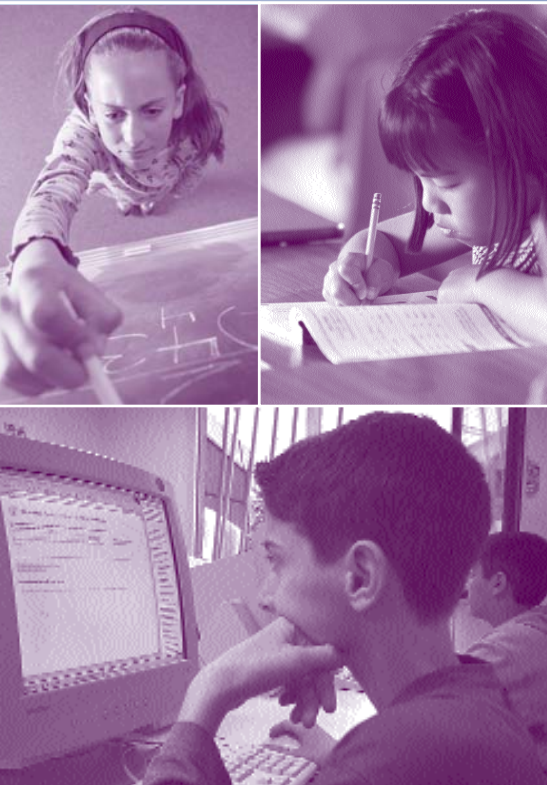


State Representative **Vanessa Summers**



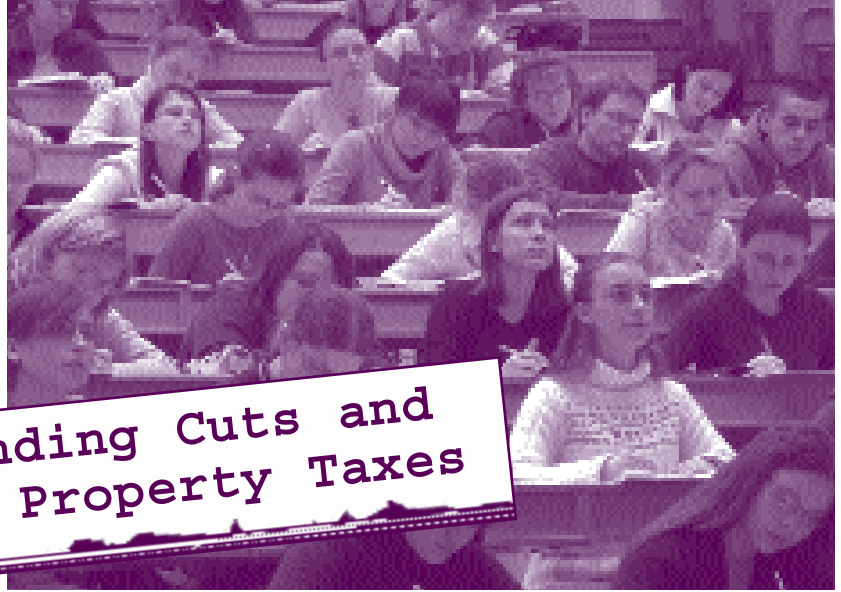
Session Report



- ☒ The New State Budget
- ☒ Education Legislation
- ☒ Voter ID Legislation
- ☒ Economic Development Initiatives

INDIANA'S NEW BUDGET

School Funding Cuts and Increased Property Taxes



The new state budget that passed by a narrow margin increases property taxes and, at the same time, cuts funding for local schools.

After all of our hard work to reduce property taxes, I am extremely disappointed that the majority party has approved a budget that will cut state funding for many schools and raise property taxes by nearly \$850 million.



Concerned parents attend a rally at the Statehouse to plead for appropriate funding for schools.

I voted "NO" on the final version of the state budget because of the negative impact it will have on education, children and those who pay property taxes. I believe there will be many victims of the new state budget for several reasons.

First, unlike in past years, there are no minimum guarantees in state funding for schools, which means more

than 140 school corporations will receive less money. Those corporations will be forced into eliminating teachers, cutting programs and increasing class sizes. Any additional funding for schools will come primarily from raising local property taxes.

Second, there will be less state support through the Property Tax Replacement Credit (PTRC), another move that will increase local property taxes. This eliminates the promise of just three years ago to provide more state support to combat rising property taxes after the statewide reassessment.

In addition, funding for the program that provides health care for the elderly, disabled and children will increase by five percent, despite bipartisan predictions of a 10-percent growth. State assistance for road repairs and improvements will decrease as well.

It is a shame that the legacy of this session will be a budget that turns its back on Indiana's schoolchildren and property taxpayers. For anyone who cares about education and local taxpayers, it is simply indefensible.

"I believe there will be many victims of the new state budget."



Education Issues Update



A number of bills were passed this session which will be important for education in Indiana.

Starting in the 2010-11 school year, **students will have to complete the Core 40 curriculum in order to graduate.**

Core 40 requires students to receive credits in a series of advanced courses, including English and language arts, math, science, social studies and foreign languages.

Other education bills will **change the enrollment date for kindergarten to August 1 from July 1**, require schools to adopt rules to prohibit bullying, and provide daily opportunities for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

Several proposals were defeated, including a plan to move the ISTEP-plus test to the spring and revive the school voucher program.

Voter ID Proposal a Flawed Reform Approach

You might have heard that the General Assembly passed a partisan plan to require individuals to show photo identification in order to vote on Election Day. Upon first glance, this sounds like a good idea. Present your driver's license and you can vote. Who couldn't meet that requirement?

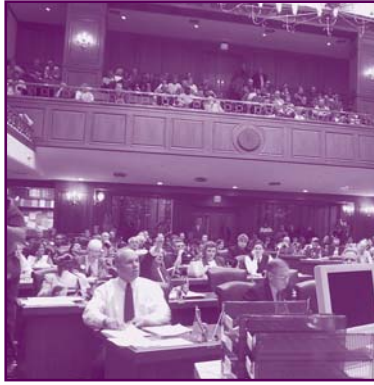
People who live at nursing homes and no longer drive, for one. Women who have married and changed their names, because their driver's licenses will not match their voter registration files. Minorities who have had to face many barriers in the past to their efforts to vote. But some people see this as an unnecessary invasion of privacy rights.

The idea has been sold as a way to eliminate fraud and restore honesty to the electoral process. What advocates for the bill have failed to tell you is that this bill will surely deny some Hoosiers the right to vote. Individuals without photo IDs will be required to obtain an ID. This requires fees including obtaining a birth certificate if a voter does not have one.



Representative Summers works at her desk in the chamber of the House of Representatives.

The vast majority of voters have photo IDs and have no problem showing them. Those who do not have a photo ID when they are at the polls would be allowed to vote by provisional ballots. But there are problems with this procedure. In the past, as many as half of the provisional ballots were not counted due to processing errors.



Citizens fill the House Chamber for the committee hearing on the Voter ID bill.

The cases of electoral fraud in Indiana have all involved absentee ballots, and this legislation fails to address that issue. As the majority party advanced this proposal, it did not provide a single instance where electoral fraud in Indiana has occurred at a polling site. The main problem in Indiana is not fraud, it is lack of voter participation.

This legislation has several major flaws, and a court challenge already has been launched to determine if it violates basic principles of the Indiana Constitution. Several organizations, including the AARP and the League of Women Voters, objected to the legislation in its final form.

2005 Session Highlights



Rep. Summers reviews legislation during a committee meeting.

Inspector General

Fraud and corruption in state government will be investigated by an inspector general created through a new state law approved in 2005. Thanks to changes championed by House Democrats, this inspector will work with locally-elected prosecutors and judges to look into charges of wrongdoing and determine whether to proceed with criminal charges.

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Making Strides for Economic Development

One of the most important responsibilities of the Indiana General Assembly is to create, maintain and increase good-paying jobs.



ECONOMIC TOOLS

The very first bill passed into law this session created a new public-private entity—the Indiana Economic Development Corporation—to serve as the leader for development efforts across our state.

Other measures were passed which will extend the deadline for property tax abatements and TIF districts, codify the Research and Development Sales Tax Exemption/Credit, and give additional tax breaks to small business owners to reduce the potential that they will be harmed by government regulation.

Senate Bill 1 also allows the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to designate up to three areas as Global Commerce Centers to promote job growth and employment.

SPURRING NEW GROWTH

Much of the economic development language that passed was aimed at drawing in new businesses to support job growth. One of those measures will speed up the process of preparing sites for development, making them “shovel-ready.”



Another bill establishes a Headquarters Relocation Credit to entice corporations to move their operations to Indiana.

These changes, when implemented together, will help to showcase Indiana as a thriving economy with opportunities for meaningful work and a high quality of life.

Representative Vanessa Summers

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